

**Essex Mental Health Independent Inquiry staff evidence:**

**initial expression of interest**

The Essex Mental Health Independent Inquiry is a public inquiry established to investigate the deaths and treatment of mental health inpatients across NHS Trusts in Essex from 2000 – 2020. This includes where patients were waiting for a mental health bed, or where they died up to 3 months following discharge from hospital.

This is your opportunity to tell the Inquiry about your experiences and what you’d like to see changed in mental health care. We are welcoming views and input from all staff or volunteers working in any aspect mental health care.

The Inquiry is independent of Essex Partnership University Trust (EPUT) and the NHS. Any evidence provided to the Inquiry will not be shared with your employer. Further details on confidentiality can be found in the FAQs or you are welcome to talk to the team about any concerns you have.

Below is a series of questions that will help the Inquiry team understand your experience of working in mental health and your views on the care and treatment provided. This is an initial expression of interest to give evidence. Please answer the questions as fully as you are able, including dates and locations of any examples or incidents you describe. You do not need to answer every question. Once you have sent this initial document, a member of the Inquiry team will be in contact with you to further discuss giving evidence to the Inquiry.

The Inquiry team is dedicated to producing recommendations that will make a real difference to the care and treatment provided to those who need mental health inpatient services. The views and experience of staff from across the sector are essential to this. We are very grateful for any evidence you provide.

If you’d like to discuss anything with the team, please contact us: by email contact@emhii.org.uk or leave a voicemail and we will call you back, 020 7972 3500.

Thank you.

# **Staff written evidence preliminary questions**

1. **Please tell us about your work in the mental health services:**

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| Please tell us your job title(s), *For example: Charge Nurse, Consultant Psychiatrist, Occupational Therapist, Cleaner, Care Worker, Volunteer Advocate, Psychologist, Therapist, Social Worker, Peer Worker, Catering Staff, Cleaner, Porter.* |
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| Please tell us about your responsibilities in this / these roles |
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| What Trust(s) do/did you work for or in?*Please include the dates you worked for each trust* |
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| Are you or have you been employed as bank staff and/or agency? *If yes, please include the name of the agency or contracted organisation*  |
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| Have you ever worked in a mental health inpatient unit? *If yes, please tell us the name(s) of the unit(s) and ward(s). Please also include the dates that you worked in each of these units.* |
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| What patient group(s) do/did you work with?*For example: CAMHS, older adults, personality disorder patients*  |
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| Is there anything else you’d like to tell us about the jobs you’ve done in the mental health services? |
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1. **Please can you tell us about why you chose to work in mental health care?**

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1. **Please tell us about support and training:**

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| Do you feel that you have received the training and support you need for the work that you do?  |
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| Is there any additional training or support that would have benefitted you in your role or previous role(s)?  |
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| Do you feel that colleagues around you always have the training and support they need to carry out their roles appropriately? |
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1. **Please tell us about the care and treatment you have provided to patients:**

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| In your role are you (or were you) consistently able to provide safe, high-quality, and evidence-based care and treatment for patients? |
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| Is there anything that prevents you from providing such care? |
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1. **What is your view of senior managers, the culture and leadership in the mental health organisation(s) you work for / have worked for?**

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1. **Please share your views on the care provided by mental health services:**

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| Please describe any examples of where you’ve provided or witnessed excellent care and / or treatment being given to mental health inpatients |
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| Please describe any example of where you’ve provided or witnessed poor quality care and / or treatment being given to mental health inpatients  |
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| Please describe any situation you’ve witnessed that has had either a positive or negative impact on patient or staff safety. |
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1. **Have you ever witnessed or been involved in a serious incident? Please tell the Inquiry about what happened.**

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| We would be particularly interested to hear whether you felt you had the knowledge and support to respond and whether you were sufficiently supported during and after the event. |
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| Have you ever looked after a patient who has died? Please tell us about what happened and any support you received after the event, including any inquest process? |
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1. **Please tell us about the involvement of patients and their families in patients’ treatment and care:**

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| In your experience, to what extent are patients and families involved in patients’ treatment and care? |
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|  Is there anything that prevents meaningful involvement of patients and families in patients’ treatment and care?  |
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1. **Would you be happy for you or members of your family to receive mental health care in any of the places that you have worked?**

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1. **What recommendations would you make to improve the treatment, care, and safety of mental health patients in the future?**

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1. **Is there anything else you’d like to tell the Inquiry about the Trust where you work or have worked?**

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1. **Is there anything else you’d like to tell the Inquiry?**

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**Contact details:**

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| --- | --- |
| Name |  |
| Email address |  |
| Phone number |  |
| How should the Inquiry contact you? |  |
| When is it best to contact you (e.g. evenings only) and is it ok to leave you a voicemail? |
|  |

 *Please note, you are welcome to provide your evidence anonymously. However, the Inquiry team may wish to follow up on aspects of your evidence or hear more about your experiences and recommendations. We’d be very grateful if you’d provide your contact details.*

**Frequently Asked Questions**

***Can I provide evidence to the Inquiry privately?***

Any present or former member of staff may give their evidence to the Inquiry **privately**. This applies to both written evidence and evidence given in a session with the Inquiry team.

The Inquiry wants staff to feel able to speak freely and in detail about any concerns which they may have. We understand that many people would prefer to do this without their employer, manager or colleagues being aware.

As a general approach the Inquiry will not make your details public. In addition, the Inquiry will not tell your employer that you have spoken to us. We would only do so under exceptional circumstances, such as where there may be issues of professional misconduct, criminal acts or safeguarding concerns. We will discuss this with you first.

If you would like the Inquiry team to treat any part of your evidence as provided on an **anonymous** basis please let us know.

Staff evidence is extremely important to the Inquiry. The evidence which we receive from staff will form part of our evidence basis. It will assist us in our investigations and may be referred to within our final report.

Further information can be found within our [**Privacy Information Notice**](https://www.emhii.org.uk/privacy/) and our [**Safeguarding Policy**](https://www.emhii.org.uk/safeguarding/).

***Can I give evidence on an anonymous basis? What is the difference between this, giving evidence privately and giving evidence anonymously?***

Evidence received will be reviewed, analysed, and used in the writing of the final report.

In order that the Inquiry can use the evidence of staff as part of its investigations and in the final report, we ask that staff provide their name and contact details to the Inquiry team. This is important as it allows the Inquiry to rely upon the evidence which has been provided and to investigate any concerns and issues further. The Inquiry is generally unable to use any evidence which it receives without these details.

Many staff may ask to give evidence privately. This means that other that no one else would be present at the evidence session other than members of the Inquiry team.

We understand that many staff may be concerned about speaking with the Inquiry and may have some concerns about their details becoming known. For that reason, the Inquiry will consider any requests made by staff to keep all or part of the evidence which they have provided as anonymous. This means, that whilst the Inquiry team will know your name and details, we would not disclose any which may identify you within the final report or to the wider public.

If evidence is being treated as anonymous by the Inquiry, we would only disclose any personal details under exceptional circumstances, such as where there may be issues of professional misconduct, criminal acts or safeguarding concerns. If this did happen, we would discuss this with you first.

The Inquiry believes that it is important that any concerns, comments or recommendations of staff are made known to the Trust, wider system and the public. This is to ensure that the Inquiry is able to make effective recommendations.

***Does my anonymity depend on whether the Inquiry is statutory or non-statutory?***

Anonymity of Inquiry witnesses is not dependent on whether the Inquiry is statutory or non-statutory.

Witnesses in either format of inquiry are able to request that certain parts of their evidence be private and that their names and details are not made public.

However, non-statutory inquiries have more flexibility in how they approach taking evidence. And statutory inquiries start from the presumption that evidence will be public.

EMHII is a non-statutory public inquiry; as a general approach EMHII’s Chair has agreed that staff evidence sessions will be held privately – but this is not the same as agreeing that a witness may be anonymous. It means that a person may give evidence in a private meeting with Inquiry staff without any members of the public present.

Witnesses can apply for anonymity when giving evidence to either a non-statutory or statutory inquiry. Any request to give evidence anonymously, will be considered by the Chair. The Chair will then make a decision and communicate this with the applicant.

EMHII may have a duty to disclose evidence given to us in line with our privacy notice and as required by law.

Evidence received will be reviewed, analysed, and used in the writing of the final report and the Chair may decide to make reference to your evidence and to name witnesses in the final report should she choose to do so.

***I have been invited to attend an evidence session with the Inquiry. When will I know what questions I will be asked, and if I have been called in relation to a specific case?***

Further detail on topics and areas of questioning, including the name/s of any individual patient/s that we intend to ask you questions about, will be shared with you in advance of your evidence session. This is to ensure that you have sufficient time to prepare. The purpose of the evidence session is to seek information from you and we want to ensure that you are as prepared as you can be.

***What support is available to people giving evidence to the Inquiry?***

We understand that giving evidence to the Inquiry may be emotionally challenging or stressful. The Inquiry team will treat everyone who comes forward with dignity and respect. The Inquiry offers independent emotional support via the British Red Cross to witnesses or anyone who is concerned about sharing their views. Please let us know if you would like to access this offer.

***What is EPUT’s view on staff providing evidence to the Inquiry?***

EPUT actively encourages staff to speak to the Inquiry. Paul Scott, Chief Executive of EPUT, has issued a statement to encourage staff to engage with the Inquiry and has confirmed that staff will not be detrimentally treated or disadvantaged in the workplace as a result. You can read this below:

*“To those staff members who are invited to, or volunteer to, give evidence I would ask you to fully engage with the inquiry team and I wanted to reassure you that you will not be detrimentally treated or disadvantaged in the workplace as a result. As an organisation, we have welcomed and engaged with the Inquiry with openness, honesty and transparency. We are proud of our staff and our alignment to our EPUT values and we encourage you to engage with this learning process fully and openly in support the people and communities we serve.”*

We understand that individuals who wish to provide details of their experiences may be concerned about any potentially negative impact on them at work.

We can also provide any staff who have particular concerns about privacy with a letter of comfort. This letter will confirm they may attend a private evidence session, request that any part of their evidence be treated as anonymous and an assurance that unless there are exceptional circumstances we will not tell their employer, colleagues or manager that they have met with the Inquiry.

Further information can be found within our [**Privacy Information Notice**](https://www.emhii.org.uk/privacy/) and our [**Safeguarding Policy**](https://www.emhii.org.uk/safeguarding/).

If you have concerns about providing evidence please speak to a member of the Inquiry team.

***What if I want to give evidence as a “whistle-blower”?***

Whistle-blower is a term which means a person who provides information on an organisation which may be viewed as poor practice.

There are certain provisions in law which protect a person who wishes to make disclosures to their employer about their concerns of poor practice. The NHS also has a Speaking Up policy in place for whistle-blowers.

Those provisions do not apply to the Inquiry as it does not directly employ mental health staff and it is independent of the NHS.

However, we appreciate that individuals may wish to come forwards and share their experiences and may be concerned about any potentially negative impact on them at work. For that reason, we can provide any staff who are concerned about their privacy with a letter of comfort. This includes confirmation that they will attend a private evidence session, that they can request that any part of their evidence be treated as anonymous and an assurance and that unless there are exceptional circumstances we will not tell their employer, colleagues or manager that they have met with the Inquiry.

Further information can be found within our [**Privacy Information Notice**](https://www.emhii.org.uk/privacy/) and our [**Safeguarding Policy**](https://www.emhii.org.uk/safeguarding/).

If you are concerned about providing evidence as a *“whistle-blower”* please speak to a member of the Inquiry team.

***Who are you interested in hearing from? Am I able to share my views?***

The Inquiry welcomes information from anyone working or volunteering in mental health care. This may include but is not limited to: all staff from the multi-disciplinary team, doctors, nurses, care workers, psychologists, therapists, social workers, peer workers, catering staff, cleaners, porters.

This list is not exhaustive – if you are not sure whether your evidence may be relevant, please get in touch to discuss further with the Inquiry team.

***I don’t work in Essex; can I still share my views?***

Yes. The Essex Mental Health Independent Inquiry has been established to investigate deaths which took place within Essex. However, if you have information which you think may assist the Inquiry in its work, in particular in relation to making recommendations to improve patient care more broadly, then please do get in touch.

***What will happen to my evidence?***

Hearing views and experiences of staff is vital to the work on the Inquiry. It can assist us in our investigations and enable us to understand some of the key areas which are important to the provision of safe and effective care.

We would like to be able to refer to the evidence from staff within our work and within our final report. However, we understand that many staff are concerned about their employers, colleagues or friends knowing that they have spoken to the Inquiry.

If you would like to provide evidence for the Inquiry to use on an anonymous basis, please let us know. If you are anonymous, we will not refer to anything which might identify you within the final report.

After the Inquiry has published its final report, we will delete or destroy all evidence collected unless we are required to retain it.

***What would happen if the Inquiry was converted to a statutory inquiry?***

EMHII is currently a non-statutory public inquiry. Should EMHII be converted to a statutory inquiry this would not necessarily mean that evidence sessions would be held in public, nor would it necessarily mean that all staff would be named publicly.

It would mean that you would receive a written request for evidence which would set out the questions which the inquiry wishes to ask you. You would usually give a witness statement in response. The Chair may also ask witnesses to attend a hearing to give evidence in person.

Witnesses to a statutory inquiry may be entitled to legal representation in giving their evidence and would have the right to apply for your legal costs to be covered by the Inquiry.

***I am still concerned about giving evidence. What can I do?***

If you are worried about being identified or about speaking to us, please let us know. The Inquiry team is happy to discuss any issues or concerns which you may have. Please send an email to **contact@emhii.org.uk** or leave a voicemail for the team on 0207 9723500.

In certain circumstances the Chair of the Inquiry can provide you with a letter of assurance which can address some of your concerns.